

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



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24th July, 2009

The New York Times
ATTN; Letters to the Editor
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Editor

The recent article "Radical Islamists Slip Easily Into Kenya", vividly described some of the challenges the Kenya Government faces from having the failed state of Somalia as a neighbor. However, Jeffrey Gettleman addressed only one aspect of this complex problem; he referred to the threat from Islamic terrorism but did not mention the enormous humanitarian burden which Kenya carries and which prevents it from being able to close its international border with Somalia.

For many years, Kenya has served as the beacon of hope for the thousands of refugees fleeing from the misery and civil strife in Somalia. According to the United Nations High Commission of Refugees, Kenya is currently home to more than 260,000 Somali refugees. In 2008 alone, some 62,000 new Somali refugees arrived in Kenya. As the conflict in Somalia persists, Kenya is obligated to provide refuge and security, which means patrolling the border, but not closing it completely.

Kenya is also one of the Western countries' closest allies in the region. We are committed to working with American and British advisors to maintain and build on our counterterrorism efforts. These efforts have included working with the United States to develop a Ranger Strike Force, capable of conducting operations against armed groups, and the Regional Maritime Center of Excellence, designed to deal with maritime terrorism. For our counterterrorism efforts, the Kenya Government has received harsh criticism from human rights organizations – often the same organizations which have demanded that we keep the border open to provide a safe haven for the thousands of Somali refugees.

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